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ABSTRACT

This document profiles Ohio's seven award-winning workplace literacy programs. The workplace literacy programs described are offered by a mix of urban and rural firms which employ between 85 and 2,323 individuals in a variety of sectors. The workplace literacy programs offered by the following firms are described: Cleveland Track Material; L.J. Minor Food Service in Cleveland; Lima Engine Plant of the Ford Motor Company; Hollaender Manufacturing Company in Cincinnati; Mantaline Corporation in Mantua; MedCenter Hospital of the Ohio MedCenter Foundation in Marion; and Performance Site Management in Columbus. Each program description includes some or all of the following: background information on the firm (age, number of employees, and major products/services); discussion of the strategies for developing stakeholder support, assessing workplace skills, designing the learning program, implementing the learning program, and evaluating results; and name and address of a contact person. (MN)

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MODELS of EXCELLENCE

A Review of Ohio's Award-Winning Workplace Literacy Programs
1996 Supplement

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Ohio Bureau of Employment Services

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MODELS OF EXCELLENCE

A Review of Ohio's Award-Winning Workplace Literacy Programs

1996 Supplement

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April 1996

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The information contained in this report has been summarized from nominations for the Ohio Governor's Workforce Excellence Award. For more information, contact the Office of Workforce Development at 614-466-0582.

CLEVELAND TRACK MATERIAL, INC.
Cleveland, Ohio

Cleveland Track Material, Inc. manufactures track material for Class I railroads, short lines, transit systems and industrial customers. Established in 1984 with a staff of six, the company now employs 296 people and supplies 15 percent of the domestic railroad market. It is tied with one other firm for the position of second largest track work company in the U.S., and is the only track work company in the nation with ISO 9002 certification. Cleveland Track Material received the 1996 Governor's Workforce Excellence Award.

Developing Stakeholder Support

Starting in 1991, Cleveland Track Material experienced rapid growth in demand and production capacity, due in part to the withdrawal of some larger competitors from the field and the company's purchase of its competitor's equipment. At the same time, quality specifications became more exacting. The company responded by obtaining ISO certification and effecting technological improvements, including the computerization of all administrative and support activities.

These efforts prompted a continuous improvement approach to business. Cleveland Track Material management noted that "another term for continuous improvement is learning." In keeping with this policy, the company solicited training proposals from a number of service providers and settled on a proposal from North Coast Tutoring Services in Cleveland.

Management felt strongly that boosting the occupational, language and learning skills of participants would improve productivity, as well as enhance the citizenship of the employees, many of whom reside near the company. Consequently, Cleveland Track Material management helped develop the Learning Opportunities Program and consults with the service provider on course modifications. Company management helps monitor attendance and progress of participants and pays instructional costs, materials and other class expenses, as well as wages for half the time that employees are in class.

Employees demonstrate their stake in the program by attending half of each course period on their own time. Absenteeism, which was a problem in the beginning, diminished greatly when class-time wages were made contingent on full attendance. The program is very popular and instructors report that participants are friendly, enthusiastic, and attentive.

Assessing Workplace Skills

Many Cleveland Track Material employees were veterans of traditional manufacturing work that had lower academic skill requirements. In addition, many Cleveland Track Material employees are recent immigrants from non-English speaking countries. Because of these kinds of employee backgrounds, company management saw a need to enhance basic language and math skills.

Skill assessment is offered on a voluntary basis for all employees. In the first year of the program, 109 out of 133 employees participated. The process entails a 20-minute private interview between individual employees and tutors from the educational provider. The interview uses verbal questions only to avoid the intimidation and embarrassment that written tests cause for many people, especially those who have poor literacy skills. All individual results remain with North Coast Tutoring Service, which sends confidential letters to participants' homes that recommend specific courses.

Designing the Learning Program

The Learning Opportunities Program focuses on workplace literacy, including remedial, basic and advanced skills in English, reading and math. This is seen as a prerequisite for improving technical and thinking skills, as well as personal qualities. Goals for the program include improvements in personal job performance, literacy skills and familiarity with the company, as well as increased morale, loyalty, safety and team spirit.

The Learning Opportunities Program includes classes such as beginning reading linguistics, reading comprehension, writing, spelling, English as a second language, basic math skills and basic blueprint reading.

Additional instructional components are developed or purchased based on individual needs. Private tutoring also is available. The courses listed above, except for math, use the Richards Read Systematic Language Program, a method that accommodates different learning styles by providing auditory, tactile and kinesthetic stimuli, in addition to the normal visual cues.

Implementing the Learning Program

Regular communication between company management and the educational provider ensures continuous fine tuning of the curriculum. Participating employees also are involved in the quality control of classes. For example, when workers expressed difficulty understanding a certain instructor's presentation, the educational provider sent a trainer to help the instructor improve her teaching techniques.

Participation in the program is voluntary. Classes are scheduled the same time each day, starting at the beginning of a shift. Most participants attend class about four hours a week. North Coast Tutoring Services compiles monthly progress reports on each student, which help to guide discussions with management on course changes.

Evaluating Results

Over a three year period, 158 workers have participated in the Learning Opportunities Program. On average, 65 workers are in class each week. During calendar year 1995, they averaged a total of 192 class hours per week. Enthusiasm for the training runs high, and company management attributes high levels of morale, productivity, and company loyalty to the benefits that workers have derived from this program.

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FOOD INGREDIENTS SPECIALITIES, L. J. MINOR FOODSERVICE DIVISION
Cleveland, Ohio

The L. J. Minor Foodservice Division of Food Ingredients Specialties is a subsidiary of Nestle USA. The division employs 221 workers at three locations in northeast Ohio and manufactures soup and gravy concentrates and meat, vegetable and poultry bases for the food processing industry. The L. J. Minor Foodservice Division received the 1995 Governor's Workforce Excellence Award.

Developing Stakeholder Support

L. J. Minor Foodservice's total quality management strategy focused on continuous improvement throughout the organization. This included the implementation of a production management program that relied on the accuracy of information from the plant floor. The company also promoted employee involvement and commitment as a way of increasing employee self-confidence and performance. The company became aware of a training need when it noticed inventory errors in the shipping and transfer area of the company. The company also knew that the increasing number of process deficiency reports it was receiving from USDA inspectors indicated a need for better sanitation training. Finally, the company was concerned about increased equipment downtime caused by inadequate operating policies and equipment training.

The stakeholders in this project included company employees and customers, Project: LEARN and the Cleveland City Schools' Office of Adult and Continuing Education. The company wanted to help employees develop a thorough understanding of their work responsibilities and obtain the skills needed to perform those responsibilities. It also believed that customers would benefit because the training would lead to higher quality products. Project: LEARN provided skill assessments for the project and Cleveland City Schools provided basic skills instruction for the L. J. Minor employees.

Assessing Workplace Skills

L. J. Minor contracted with Project: LEARN of Cleveland to evaluate the basic skills of company employees. Two months prior to the formal assessment, a Project: LEARN representative began meeting with employees, without managers present, to answer questions, explain the assessment process and assure the confidentiality of the assessment results. Notices on company bulletin boards also explained the process and stressed the confidentiality of assessment results. Project: LEARN conducted the assessment on company time. It was mandatory for all hourly employees and strongly encouraged for salaried employees, which resulted in a participation rate of more than 85 percent. The individual test results were mailed from Project: LEARN directly to the employees' homes. The company also received an overall report and individual scores

without names listed. The assessment revealed that, on average, L. J. Minor employees were reading at the eighth grade level and performing writing and math at the sixth grade level. Twelve employees had reading levels lower than sixth grade and more than 40 percent of employees performed writing and math at levels lower than sixth grade.

Designing the Learning Program

L. J. Minor's employee development program focused primarily on what employees do, could do or should do to further the goals of the corporation. The program enabled employees to participate in six different performance areas:

1. Team process solving. Employees received training in brainstorming and problem solving concepts from the company's training staff. Employees formed teams to work on specific job-related problems. Supervisors also had the authority to conduct "opportunity meetings" to brainstorm ways to resolve issues in the workplace.
2. Basic skills training. Employees who wanted to improve their basic skills could schedule classes through the Cleveland City Schools' Office of Adult and Continuing Education, which offers programs in math, writing and GED preparation. Employees were pre-tested to determine their specific skill levels before beginning eight weeks of instruction. The self-paced programs included two hour-long sessions or one two-hour session each week.
3. Safety learning. The company's loss prevention technician scheduled regular classes for all employees. The topics included general safety procedures, lifting techniques, first aid and emergency evacuation procedures.
4. Sanitation learning. These classes were conducted by the company's sanitation technologist and addressed issues such as the proper cleaning and sanitizing of plant equipment, food handling techniques and good personal hygiene.
5. Operations learning. The company operations training technician conducted classes for all employees. The classes were held on the plant floor so that employees could experience a hands-on approach to learning. The class topics included the assembly, operation and troubleshooting of plant equipment.
6. Job Learning. When new employees joined the company or current employees changed jobs, they spent a few days in on-the-job training with a "buddy" who showed them correct operating procedures and methods.

Implementing the Learning Program

Since many of L. J. Minor's employees work 10- or 13-hour shifts, the company provided all training on company time and at company expense. If employees needed to come in on their own time, they were compensated for their time in class. Classes consisted of no more than five employees to provide greater class interaction and allow

more individual attention between the instructor and learners. The company scheduled five utility employees to replace employees who were in class. All classes were held on-site in the company training room.

The company paid all expenses of the employee development program. Expenses included salary and benefits for instructors, utility workers and other company personnel, materials for the basic skills classes and costs related to Project: LEARN's assessment process. For 1994, the total expense for the program was more than $208,000.

L. J. Minor marketed the employee development program primarily through company-wide meetings, bulletin board announcements and fliers. Although participation in the basic skills and team process solving classes was voluntary, attendance was mandatory for the other classes.

Evaluating Results

L. J. Minor achieved outstanding results in 1994 that it attributes largely to its employee development program. The company's productivity increased by 15 percent, with a corresponding nine percent decrease in direct labor costs. The company experienced a 30 percent decrease in the number of workplace accidents and a 50 percent reduction in lost time injuries -- evidence that employees now are working smarter and safer. L. J. Minor also had a 20 percent decrease in process deficiency records from USDA inspectors.

Post-training math scores for nearly all participants showed significant improvements and several employees currently are working toward completion of their GEDs. Immediate family members participate in the basic skills classes and one spouse currently is pursuing a GED. However, getting employees to recognize their need for improvement in basic skills was perhaps the company's biggest challenge. After a small group of employees registered for a math class and began doing homework together at lunch, excitement about the program began to spread.

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FORD MOTOR COMPANY, LIMA ENGINE PLANT
Lima, Ohio

The Lima Engine Plant is one of Ford Motor Company's largest engine manufacturing and assembly facilities and produces more than 30 percent of Ford's North American engines. The company employs 2,323 workers, making it the largest employer in Allen County. The Lima Engine Plant, in partnership with United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 1219, received the 1995 Governor's Workforce Excellence Award.

Developing Stakeholder Support

The National Education and Development Training Center coordinates the delivery of a broad range of educational and personal growth opportunities for UAW-represented Ford employees. The National Center, which is governed jointly by Ford and the UAW, created the Skills Enhancement Program to help employees continue their educations, brush up on academic skills and receive basic skills instruction. The emphasis on improving employee basic skills, along with the growing globalization of Ford's product lines, provided the initial awareness of the need to prepare the plant's employees for a more technologically complex production process.

The stakeholders for the Skills Enhancement Program included Ford, UAW Local 1219, the National Education and Development Training Center, RWD Technologies, the University of Toledo and the State of Ohio. Ford and the UAW understood that current employee skill levels were inadequate to serve the highly technological needs of the company's future and that the impact of the skill deficiencies encompassed virtually all of Ford's operations. The National Center provided technical and financial resources for the program; UAW Local 1219 provided physical space for assessment testing. RWD Technologies provided assessment services, the University of Toledo provided assessment and instructional services and the State of Ohio helped fund construction of the plant's $4.3 million UAW-Ford Learning Center.

Assessing Workplace Skills

The stakeholders invested considerable effort to ensure the success of the assessment efforts. The Employee Relations Manager and UAW Local President attended the beginning of each assessment session to reinforce the value of on-site education and stress the joint plant-union support for the program. They explained the opportunity employees had to create their own educational action plans and explained how the program could help employees prepare for the plant's skilled trade tests. They also emphasized the confidentiality of employee information obtained by the University. This joint effort enabled Lima Engine Plant to become the first UAW-represented auto manufacturing plant to assess the skills of its entire workforce.

Assessment took place during normal work hours as part of a three-week core curriculum that was available to all hourly employees. The University of Toledo administered the assessment, scored the assessments and sent participant scores to the on-site University coordinator, who used the information in one-on-one counseling sessions with employees. The University used the Work-related Foundation Skills version of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), which measures employees' work-related reading, mathematics and language skills. In addition to the TABE assessment of individual employees, RWD Technologies conducted a plant-wide general needs analysis that revealed significant gaps related to technical, problem solving, process improvement, team building and general education skills.

Designing the Learning Program

The assessments enabled the University's on-site coordinator to help employees develop individual learning plans that would improve employee reading, math and written communication skills, prepare for the General Education Diploma (GED) exam or develop the prerequisite skills for job-related training. To achieve these objectives, the University of Toledo created an instructional strategy that included:

1. A customized curriculum that provided reading, writing and math instruction.
2. A GED and high school completion component for employees who wanted to complete their high school education.
3. An on-site learning center that provided individual academic instruction, tutoring and "quiet place" reading facilities.
4. Personalized educational and academic advising.
5. Computer assisted academic instruction that enabled employees to work at their own pace and in private.
6. An occupational adult learning series that integrated reading and math instruction with skills common to the auto manufacturing trades.
7. A math enrichment program that provided students with sequentially ordered math skill building activities.
8. A Technical Readiness Program that reviewed basic math and reading skills for employees who planned to take the skilled trades tests.

Implementing the Learning Program

Marketing for the Skills Enhancement Program has been vital to the program's success. Marketing efforts have included employee mailings, articles in the plant newspaper and UAW newsletter, posters, and notices on the in-plant television or communication system. The program is voluntary and open to all UAW-represented employees. Most components are provided before or after employee shifts, although some components are offered during scheduled work times. Individual instruction for GED preparation, math and reading occurs on employees' personal time.

A trailer outside the plant currently is used for training while the plant's UAW-Ford Training Center is under construction. When the facility is completed, all instruction will move there to take advantage of the center's state-of-the-art classrooms and computer, electrical, mechanical and woodworking labs. The Skills Enhancement Program is funded jointly by the National Education and Development Training Center and Lima Engine Plant's UAW-Ford Education and Development Training Program. A contractual agreement exists with the University of Toledo to reimburse the university for all expenses related to instructional and administrative staff, classroom supplies, computer hardware and software, travel expenses, reference materials and other general program costs.

Evaluating Results

Since the Lima Engine Plant Skills Enhancement Program was initiated in 1993, the University of Toledo has served more than 1,000 employees and family members. Although the Skill Enhancement Program has not been active long enough to report extensive data, UAW-Ford expects that employees will show statistically significant gains in reading, language, math and writing skills. The company already has witnessed a 72 percent increase in scores for employees who have taken a math course in preparation for Statistical Process Control (SPC) training. Other UAW-Ford expectations include:

1. At least 20 percent of GED participants will pass the GED exam.
2. Improved SPC performance, which will result in reduced scrap costs and higher quality engines.
3. Fewer safety infractions because employees will better understand safety and lockout instructions.
4. Employee self esteem will increase as employees become psychologically and academically prepared for upgraded manufacturing capabilities in the plant.
5. Improved working partnerships between the UAW and Ford as a result of improved critical thinking, problem solving, computer and research skills.

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HOLLAENDER MANUFACTURING COMPANY
Cincinnati, Ohio

Hollaender Manufacturing Company is recognized as a world leader in the casting and machining of aluminum pipe fittings used to assemble handrails. The company's 85 employees have produced products for uses as diverse as railings for the Capitol Mall in Washington, DC and the undersea robot Jason, Jr. which found the Titanic. Hollaender Manufacturing Company received the 1995 Governor's Workforce Excellence Award.

Developing Stakeholder Support

When Robert Hollaender became CEO of Hollaender Manufacturing Company in 1990, the company was in serious financial condition, and many people expected the company to fail within three years. Sales were down, the delivery of orders took nearly three weeks and inventories were at an all-time high -- and expanding. Production workers had become alienated from management and the company had lost its focus on customer needs. At an emergency meeting of key managers, the CEO concluded that Hollaender Manufacturing Company would survive only if everyone in the company began to work smarter and as a team.

The primary stakeholders in Hollaender's training programs include the company's salaried and management associates, including several members of the Hollaender family who work at the company. Other stakeholders who helped with the Hollaender transformation included the Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, Ken Wantuck Associates, Ashford-McCarthy, Inc. and the Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development. The Chamber of Commerce provided consulting and strategic management instruction, Ken Wantuck Associates developed and currently maintains the Just-In-Time inventory system, Ashford-McCarthy provided team building training and Great Oaks provided academic skills assessment, counseling and instruction.

The Hollaender program began with a new commitment to build a workforce that held world-wide recognition as leaders and innovators by producing products and serving customers in ways that were models of excellence for the industry. This led the company to develop specific objectives for all Hollaender associates that included:

1. Become customer focused.
2. Create team environments in which all associates could feel comfortable making contributions.
3. Teach and reteach problem solving, brainstorming and flow charting skills.
4. Reduce absenteeism, scrap and setup times.

Assessing Workplace Skills

Hollaender contracted with Great Oaks to provide a basic math and reading skills assessment for all associates, using the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Great Oaks maintains all assessment results to guarantee the confidentiality of individual employee data. Although Great Oaks staff reviewed assessment results individually with associates during private interviews, the Hollaender education team and company management received only a summary of test scores.

Hollaender management suspected that the skill levels of production associates were low, but neither management nor Great Oaks anticipated skill levels as low as the TABE revealed. After reviewing the assessment data, the company's education team determined that associates should have eighth grade reading and math skills. Great Oaks then gave Hollaender's CEO a list of associates who did not meet this level and who needed basic skills instruction.

Designing the Learning Program

After Great Oaks determined the educational level of all Hollaender associates, the service providers met to determine a common training strategy. They agreed on a small group approach to learning and adopted a teaching approach that addressed visual, auditory and kinesthetic (hands on) learning styles. After the basic skills training began showing results, Hollaender began providing team development training. The team training was focused on creating "safe" places where associates could share ideas and express opinions without fear of ridicule or reprisal. The Just-In-Time training came last, but with the number of employees engaged in basic skills and team development training, the Just-In-Time training progressed quickly.

Implementing the Learning Program

One of the few demands that Hollaender's CEO placed on the company education committee was to make all the training as user-friendly as possible. As a result, nearly all training is done on site, on company time. Basic skills classes are offered off shift in two hour blocks, with one hour paid by the company and the other on the associates' personal time. So far, more than 40 percent of Hollaender associates have participated in basic skills training. Team development and Just-In-Time training is conducted at the plant during normal work hours and on-site. Training semesters are 10 weeks long, with classes running 40 weeks per year. All off-site, for tuition classes are on the employees' own time, but tuition is fully paid. All of the training was financed entirely through inventory reductions and other cost savings as associates learned how to reduce inventories, improve customer service and streamline manufacturing processes.

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Evaluating Results

In 1991, every Hollaender associate received nearly 150 hours of training. They received 120 hours of training in 1992 and 1993 and another 100 hours in 1994. The company expects the number of training hours to increase in 1995 as it begins to implement self-directed team training. The training has had a major impact on company operations, including:

1. Hollaender Manufacturing returned to profitability in 1993.
2. The time required to process an order from initial order to product shipping has declined from 20 days to three days and inventory turnover has increased from four times per year to 27 times per year.
3. Team meetings have resulted in reduction in the absentee rate from seven percent to less than four percent. The scrap rate has been reduced by 17 percent and scrap cost rate has declined by 80 percent.
4. The foundry team recommended the purchase of equipment that reduced noise and dirt while increasing volume. The efficiency of the new equipment is so high that the company began selling excess capacity to other companies, which resulted in a new profit center for the company.
5. A production team developed a new dust collection system that reduced floor dust collection from 80 pounds to two pounds per week.

Finally, Hollaender's ability to turn around the company through training has led to presentations throughout the country and a feature story in *Modern Machine Shop* magazine. Companies from as far away as Japan have visited Hollaender Manufacturing Company to learn more about the company's transformation.

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MANTALINE CORPORATION
Mantua, Ohio

Mantaline Corporation was established in 1964 and currently employs 155 people. It produces precision extruded rubber products for foreign and domestic markets in the transportation, construction, hardware, consumer and industrial sectors, and specializes in solid and sponge rubber sealing products. In 1990, the company developed the Sharing Talents and Resources (STAR) training program to enhance employee productivity and team skills. Mantaline Corporation received the 1996 Governor's Workforce Excellence Award.

Developing Stakeholder Support

When employees obtained part ownership of Mantaline, they also assumed a $3 million debt. One year later, a recession was dampening the overall economy and the company's largest customer began producing for itself the items it had once purchased from Mantaline. During 1990 and 1991, the company experienced an operating loss of $125,000 and a 20 percent drop in sales. In order to survive, Mantaline reduced staff and imposed temporary wage and salary cuts. But the remaining employee-owners were still motivated to seek innovative ways to protect the company and their stake in it. To tap this resource and increase workers' competitiveness, Mantaline established the STAR program.

The company developed this program with the help of the Employee Stock Ownership Committee (ESOP), which had been elected by employees to facilitate ongoing communication between them and management. For six months, committee members received instruction in general business principles and the facts concerning Mantaline's structure, operations and performance, so that they could become full partners in decision making about the company and its training needs. Next, the committee and management held a series of meetings with general staff, where participants discussed company goals and issues and explored how training could address these.

Assessing Workplace Skills

Mantaline decided that most employees possessed more than the minimum job and technical skills required for performance, as evidenced by the high quality of production. They also concluded that while basic skills were essential to performance, immediate attention here was not necessary. Hiring was dependent on having a high school diploma or GED and on passing a document literacy test. Also, a review of the jobs performed at Mantaline determined that meeting the customer's requirements did not necessitate a high level of math skill. The company chose to concentrate on developing problem solving skills before other skills, because "people had ideas and

wanted to share them" and needed a mechanism for doing so. Moreover, the company's financial health was in jeopardy and it was important to involve employees in the effort to increase efficiency and customer satisfaction.

Designing the Learning Program

A STAR Committee was formed using senior managers and several members of the ESOP committee. The committee used the feedback from general staff to develop the goals and content of training. The group considered where the majority of employees could have the biggest impact on the bottom line and at the same time satisfy their desire to be involved. The committee felt that workers would attain this through the recognition of problems in their work areas and the implementation of good, long-term solutions. Many employees knew where deficiencies existed and simply needed training in the use of problem solving techniques, as well as a structured process to follow when tackling these problems.

The STAR Committee developed a training component for problem solving skills, based on Honda's program to prepare its employees for quality circles. Mantaline's senior managers were trained for two days by Honda in the areas of empowerment, team problem solving and implementing solutions. Next, the company's supervisors and training staff received the same instruction in-house, before the training was provided to employees. By using an existing program, Mantaline held its development costs for the problem solving course to $2,000 plus roughly 750 hours invested by company personnel over the course of a year to adapt the Honda model.

Implementing the Learning Program

The program examines the meaning of problem solving, the elements of problem solving techniques and the benefits of group versus individual problem solving. In teams of five or six people, the participants apply what they have learned using simulation exercises, many of which relate to the work setting. The course originally ran for 10 weekly sessions of an hour and a quarter each, on company time. Based on feedback from participants, it has now been restructured into a day-long Saturday session, with employees being paid time-and-a-half for participating.

In addition to the problem solving course, Mantaline developed a series of six modules, each an hour and a half long, designed to familiarize employees with all aspects of the company's operation. These are titled Rubber Chemistry, Extrusion Process, Systems Specifications, Quality, Employee Satisfaction and the Business. The modules can be taken over a flexible period ranging from three to six months. Occupational skill training is also offered, based on individual needs as determined by assessment when the employee begins work.

Workers can take the familiarization course and occupational training as soon as they are hired. Mantaline waits until employees are with the company for a minimum of six months before offering the problem solving course, believing that they need some familiarity with the company before they are comfortable enough to present their ideas or concerns in a team setting. This sequence also avoids overwhelming the employee with too much information at once.

Evaluating Results

Since 1991, Mantaline has trained 91 employees in problem solving techniques. The company credits the STAR program with overall improvements in productivity, morale and business performance. Since the program's inception in 1991, there has been a 33 percent increase in sales volume and last year the company earned record profits. Employees now own over 75 percent of Mantaline stock and they have instituted a profit sharing plan. Due to an increase in safety awareness, as well as the application of enhanced team skills in improving the safety environment, Workers' Compensation costs have fallen by 35 percent during the same period.

Mantaline has become a training model for other companies, especially those involved in ESOPs. The Northeast Ohio Employee Ownership Center has repeatedly invited company representatives to speak at its public functions and has arranged discussions here and abroad between Mantaline and Russian firms that strive to become successful employee-owned businesses. The company is located in an area with a low jobless rate and high rates of employee turn-over. With this in mind, Mantaline has considered hiring people who have significant barriers to employment to determine whether STAR training methods will help them to succeed.

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OHIO MEDCENTER FOUNDATION, MEDCENTER HOSPITAL
Marion, Ohio

MedCenter Hospital provides efficient and effective health care services for the citizens of Marion and the surrounding seven county area. For 34 years, the hospital's 440 employees have maintained an atmosphere of high quality compassionate care. MedCenter Hospital received the 1995 Governor's Workforce Excellence Award.

Developing Stakeholder Support

With the advent of required education for professional licensure, MedCenter Hospital began providing on-site educational opportunities for physicians, nurses and other professionals. Growing demands on the education department made it increasingly difficult to provide education for staff in topics that were not mandated by the state or federal government. In response to these needs, the hospital proposed an education center that would help employees acquire career knowledge and develop academic skills that would enable them to improve their work performance. A department director also saw the possibilities an on-site education center would provide for developing employees internally, which would reduce the hospital's need to recruit, hire and train job candidates from outside the hospital.

The primary stakeholders in the MedCenter Hospital program included MedCenter employees and management. Other stakeholders included the physicians associated with MedCenter Hospital and community education facilities such as Marion Technical College, Tri Rivers Career Center and The Ohio State University's Marion Campus.

The Opportunity Center focused on providing quality basic skills instruction to hospital employees who had not completed high school or did not function at the academic level of a high school graduate, promoting post-secondary education as a vehicle for employee self-improvement, facilitating the development of employee career paths and providing opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Assessing Workplace Skills

MedCenter Hospital coordinated all employee skill assessments. When employees came to the Opportunity Center for an initial assessment of academic skills, the coordinator administered the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Although specific test and survey data were shared with individual employees and at times with their supervisors, the hospital worked to maintain the confidentiality of individual employee data. For management reporting purposes, the employee data were grouped together, but the assessment results and information gathered during confidential interviews were kept in a secure part of the Opportunity Center.

Designing the Learning Program

MedCenter Hospital provided state-of-the-art instructional facilities for the program. Teaching methods were determined by the knowledge and skills of individual learners and included interactive lectures, small group sessions, role playing, audio and video tapes, computer assisted training, hands-on experience, clinical practica, observation and independent study. The center also provided additional learning opportunities through interactive teleconferences, on-site presentations and traveling learning centers. Quality improvement programs required greater interaction among learners, so the center provided cooperative learning strategies such as brainstorming, multi-voting, peer teaching, group problem solving and team building.

The basic skills programs were based on the philosophy that adults have personal learning styles and achieve mastery of subject matter at different rates. The center developed informal basic skills classes that were facilitated by employee volunteers and provided text materials that addressed different learning styles. All lessons were self-checking to enhance the learners' sense of control and self-confidence. The classes were developed in 10-week segments to encourage student goals setting, but new participants may enter the program at any time. The center used the TABE and practice GED exams to determine starting points for new learners.

Implementing the Learning Program

MedCenter Hospital currently dedicates about 1.2 percent of its operating budget to training activities, which is slightly above the national benchmark figure for health care organizations. The hospital provided the Opportunity Center with classroom and office space, furniture, secretarial and marketing support and $5,000 in seed money. Directors and supervisors contributed another $5,000 to purchase books, videos and audio cassettes for the center and other MedCenter employees have contributed over $6,000 in books. MedCenter Hospital and Marion Technical College shared the cost of professional development activities for the coordinator and the college provided on-site program administration and mass billing, which eliminated a large amount of paperwork for the hospital.

MedCenter Hospital kept employees informed about education programs through monthly calendars, fliers, radio announcements, newspaper articles and the hospital's internal newsletter. Quality improvement training was marketed as a strategic change in the way work is performed. Information about process improvement team efforts were communicated through the newsletter and storyboards in the cafeteria provided information about team results. The Opportunity Center used the hospital newsletter as its primary marketing tool. The hospital also mailed individual invitations to employees, provided fact sheets and handouts about the center and provided a recorded message about center activities on the hospital's infoline system.

The majority of the education center programs were provided on-site, although employees also attended external programs that were appropriate for their job roles. Most basic skills classes were held on-site at the Opportunity Center, during the evening and on the employee's own time. However, appointments also were arranged to meet employee needs and the lending library was open 24 hours per day.

Evaluating Results

Between July 1993 and June 1994, the MedCenter education department delivered more than 6,200 hours of education and training, primarily on clinical topics. Between August 1993 and January 1994, the quality improvement program provided more than 1,100 hours of training to more than 450 hospital employees, physicians and board members. Since the Opportunity Center opened in March 1994, it has provided more than 4,300 hours of basic skills instruction for MedCenter employees.

As a result of the training programs, hospital management has noticed a marked increased in patient satisfaction, employee performance and self-confidence. As a result of basic skills instruction, a dietary department employee was promoted to a nurse aide and currently is studying to become a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). Another LPN has begun studying to become a Registered Nurse. Another employee was promoted from clerk to supervisor after obtaining a GED and several other employees have begun GED or college-level training.

MedCenter Management also has noticed a gradual breaking down of departmental walls as employees began working in cross-functional teams. Employees now focus on trying to improve processes instead of pointing fingers when something goes wrong. This also has led to requests from hospital departments for more training that is tailored to meet specific departmental needs. Because of the employees' raised awareness of the need to improve their skills, MedCenter Hospital spent more money on training than anticipated during the first six months of the last fiscal year. However, the hospital board unanimously granted extra funds to cover projected training expenses for the rest of the year, indicating the top-to-bottom commitment to training that exists at MedCenter Hospital.

To learn more about the award-winning program at the Ohio MedCenter Foundation, contact:

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PERFORMANCE SITE MANAGEMENT
Columbus, Ohio

Performance Site Management prepares properties for construction, with services such as landscaping, moving dirt, installing utilities, and laying concrete and asphalt. The company was founded in 1988 with 25 employees. Sales have increased steadily since then, from $4 million in its first year to more than $20 million in 1995, and the company now employs 160 people. Performance Site Management received the 1996 Governor's Workforce Excellence Award.

Developing Stakeholder Support

Despite fast overall growth, Performance Site Management experienced declining profit margins throughout its first four years. With the help of construction consulting firm FMI, Performance adopted a Total Quality Management (TQM) system that allowed it to systematically address such problems. In 1993, this process revealed re-work costs totaling 1.8 percent of expenditures, topping the profit margin of 1.6 percent and it identified the cause as inadequate employee experience. At the same time, field staff were requesting the authority to make more on-site decisions, so as to satisfy customer demands faster. In response to these concerns, Performance Site Management established its Learning Program, with the goal of enabling employees to meet quality and productivity standards and to take more initiative in day-to-day operations.

Starting with initial program development, Performance Site Management involved all the pertinent stakeholders. An existing network of supervisor teams gave input on the decision to establish the program and supervisors eventually comprised the majority of teaching staff. In strategic planning discussions, management made a permanent commitment to employee education as one of its core objectives. It has backed the commitment financially with $100,000 to start the learning program and a budget of $250,000 for 1996. Most of this investment consists of half-time wages paid to employees while they are in training. Performance Site Management spends five percent of its payroll on training, compared to a national construction industry average of one percent. Additional funding has come from the Ohio Adult Basic and Literacy Education program ($37,000) and the Ohio Industrial Training Program ($10,000).

The company obtained employee buy-in by letting staff identify their own training needs. With the help of Learning Organizations in Community, Inc. (LOCI), Performance Site Management established a Learning Design Team that included representatives from all staff sectors, including field operations, administrative support, equipment maintenance and estimating. The design team talked with their peers throughout the company regarding current skill levels and how they could be enhanced. President Daniel Lorenz also solicited staff ideas at weekly TQM lunches. This interest in employees' concerns stirred their interest in the learning program, so that by 1996 more than 90 percent of them had volunteered to participate.

Assessing Workplace Skills

In discussions with employees, the design team discovered a broad interest in training and found that most people already had some sense of their learning needs. There was a concern that assessment testing might be intimidating and would discourage participation, so Performance Site Management has departed from the usual assessment process in two ways.

First, all employees entering the learning program receive the same math and blueprint course, encompassing math basics, blueprint reading, area and grade calculations, estimation of fill quantities and job costing. This course reflects the range of skills needed in company work and highlights for individual participants the areas in which they might need additional training.

Second, employees are allowed to choose for themselves which courses they will take beyond this one, including courses such as life skills and advanced math and blueprint reading. In all communications to the employees, the company emphasizes that learning, and learning to learn, have lifelong value for everyone, rather than viewing these activities as a response to individual deficiencies. The result is an open cooperation between participants that promotes candid self appraisal in the context of program activities.

Designing the Learning Program

Based on employee input, the12-member design team worked for more than a year to develop the Learning Program. Instructors collaborated with the team and with the LOCI consultant to design individual courses and to select the appropriate texts, videos and other materials. In developing course content, planners focused on relating information to the job and on promoting the use of thinking skills, such as creative thinking, decision making and problem solving. A teaching method was adopted that divides activities equally between lecture, individual learning activities and group discussion. The curriculum presently includes:

1. Core courses, including math and blueprint reading courses at two levels, operator skills, laborer skills, as well as a communications course encompassing grammar, spelling, writing, work site hand signals, speaking and listening.
2. Electives, including tutoring skills, an office overview, first aid/CPR, commercial driver licensing, introduction to computers, personal finance and construction elements such as electricity and hydraulics.
3. Life skills, consisting of small discussion groups that meet at 6:15 a.m. once a week, focusing on books such as Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.*

Implementing the Learning Program

The learning program was first implemented in January 1995. Participation is voluntary; each employee chooses whether to enroll and is empowered to develop his or her own learning plan beyond the entry math/blueprint course. Program activities are scheduled during the winter, to

take advantage of construction down time. In 1996, all classes met once a week for nine weeks in January and February, with each core course lasting 18 hours long, the life skills course lasting nine hours, and electives ranging from two to 18 hours in length. Participants are paid half their usual wages during program activities, effectively splitting the cost of training between them and the employer. Classes take place in facilities that were built by employees in the basement of Performance Site Management's Columbus offices.

Evaluating Results

Of the 130 people working in 1995 for Performance Site Management, 114 chose to participate in the Learning Program. In 1996, the number increased to 144 out of 160. This increasing participation rate reflects the program's popularity among employees.

The learning design team is responsible for evaluating the program and has approached this task primarily through participant interviews and surveys. The team devised a five-level scale of competence for each of six skills taught in the math/blueprint course. It ranges from no knowledge of the pertinent skills to enough knowledge to teach others. People who completed the course have rated themselves, on average, as one level higher in each skill area than where they were upon entering.

The company considers the program a clear success and credits it with improving employees' technical competence, learning skills, awareness of company goals and morale. Performance Site Management attributes these results in part to the CEO's complete commitment to the program, the attainment of middle managers' buy-in by making them instructors and the involvement of employees in planning both the program and their individual participation. The program has attracted attention from numerous other businesses and has been highlighted in periodicals such as *Business First*, *The Daily Reporter*, and *The Exchange*.

For more information about the award-winning program at Performance Site Management, contact:

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